



A Newsletter From State Representative Randy Truitt -- House District 26

Feb. 28, 2010

SESSION SCHEDULE

Monday, March 1 -- 10:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 2 -- 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, March 3 -- 9:00 a.m.

Thursday, February 25 -- 9:00 a.m.

(*Sine Die*, Session's final day)

INDIANA STATE TRIVIA

When Indiana was first formed, public school families pitched in to build log schoolhouses and each paid a few dollars toward the teachers salaries.

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SEARCHING FOR COMPROMISE IN SESSION'S FINAL DAYS

This week in the General Assembly is like Qualification Week at the Indianapolis 500. Everyone is working very hard to make sure that their bills are being heard or that language that is important to their district finds a home in a bill that remains alive. We worked long days and nights in order to meet the 2nd reading deadline of February 24 and the 3rd reading deadline of February 25.

We went into the week with tension and one could say that it easily met the definition. A word that I have used to describe this session is 'intriguing.' I can say that it has been that for sure. There were a number of legislative priorities including education and employment that I have been working on and I hope to see legislation pass dealing with these two important issues.

I remained frustrated that during this unprecedented economic time in Indiana history, there were very few bills dealing with the employment issues and challenges that we are facing. We have offered proposals to improve the overall economic atmosphere and environment. In Indiana, we looked for ways to provide tools for local governments to offer incentives to attract and retain businesses. However, the one major piece that remains in the balance is the Indiana unemployment insurance legislation.

Over 300,000 Hoosiers are out of work causing a huge strain on our already broke unemployment insurance fund. It was deeply in debt even before the economy soured. The fund sits at about \$1.5 billion in the red, and Indiana



Rep. Truitt honors the state champion Lafayette Central Catholic football team at the Statehouse last week.

owes about \$1.6 billion to the federal government. However, the plan to attempt to fix the fund was a tax increase on employers and I felt would have caused more damage to our unemployment situation. Last session, I consistently opposed that plan (HB 1379) which would have been a huge tax increase on Hoosier businesses. I do remain focused on making sure unemployed Hoosiers continue to receive these important benefits, but not at the expense of forcing businesses to lay off more workers because of a terribly-timed tax increase. As it stands now, Indiana has one of the highest benefit payouts in the country to those unemployed (a max of \$390 a week). However, I am proud of my Senate colleagues who worked hard to try and find a compromise in order to begin to address this situation.

This session, I've fought for the delay of that tax increase. Employers need time to emerge from this reces-



sion and levying this tax on them at this time simply isn't a wise idea. Originally Senate Bill 23 sought to delay HB1379 by one year, which I supported. But in the House this week, the bill was amended to repeal the tax entirely while at the same time adding several other 'poison pills' – at best, playing political games with this important piece of legislation. These provisions are not requiring those receiving unemployment benefits to look for a job and chipping away at property tax reforms by raising the public referendum trigger levels on school construction projects. As this bill moves forward, the Senate will control the conference committee process and I hope to see some positive resolution that protects our employers and property taxpayers alike.

Here's the bottom line -- passing a clean version of Senate Bill 23 would keep employers from cutting jobs. For those employers that are considering adding new jobs, delaying or repealing that tax by passing SB23 would allow them to move forward in doing so. Jobs are such a critical issue to our state, and I want to help be part of the solution.

I authored a measure this week that would help spur job creation in our area and other areas that have Certified Technology Parks. I filed an amendment to Senate Bill 239 which would give the County fiscal body the authority to provide a personal property tax deduction to companies who are located in one of the 19 Certified Technology Parks. The amendment passed Wednesday night on the House floor unanimously. As you well know, West Lafayette is home to the nation's number one Certified Technology Park located in the Purdue Research Park.

Today, more than ever, we need to give our local government the tools they need to attract good paying jobs. I was proud to bring this amendment to the floor and was very encouraged by the bipartisan support that it received.

The other issue was education. Indiana, thankfully, has its priorities in order. Education is an important part of our community and critical for our state. We must continue to look for creative ways to fund our education system. I have spent a considerable amount of time in meetings at schools and the Statehouse listening to concerned parents, teachers and students.

The economic conditions we are facing force all of us to be creative. Whether it is at the school level where Save our School (SOS) organizations are being formed to raise funds to protect teachers and programs or in Indianapolis as we look for creative flexibility in order to provide our schools with options to weather this economic storm. In response to the cli-

mate I felt was coming, I filed HB 1016 which was a true school funding flexibility bill that unfortunately did not receive a hearing. However, the flexibility concept was obviously well received since it was "grabbed" and used in HB 1367 and in SB 309.

I authored two amendments to SB309 -- one that was adopted unanimously, and one that failed. My passed amendment directed the interim school funding study committee to examine the effect of the school day measured in minutes rather than days. The study would help determine whether it is more cost efficient and academically effective to measure school days in minutes rather than days. This would provide another option for schools to potentially save money and provide additional flexibility while still maintaining the educational experience. This measure continues my pledge to give schools more options.

Unfortunately, my amendment to allow tax deductible donations to K-12 schools failed. I felt that during this tough time and with so many schools raising funds through foundations and other means, it was important to send a message that the State wanted to participate in this by offering an incentive. The incentive was a tax credit up to 50% of the donation not to exceed \$100 for single filer and \$200 for a joint return. I wanted to allow schools to find funds wherever possible and allowing individuals to donate to schools to help cover shortfalls while providing a tax incentive for doing so would have simply been another way to help schools.

Ultimately, I was happy to see SB 309 pass 83-16 on Thursday and it goes to conference committee to be worked on during the final days of session. I have been added to the conference committee for HB 1367 (the other school funding flexibility bill) and I look forward to finally voting on a bill that gives schools the flexibility they need.

As we continue through session's final days, please contact me with your questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Randy

TRUITT LEGISLATION

AUTHORED

- **HB 1254** - Permits a county fiscal body to allow a 100% assessed value deduction for personal property that is primarily used to conduct high technology activity and is newly located within a certified technology park.
- **HB 1253** - Provides that a municipality may adopt an ordinance that establishes licensing requirements for a person who uses a trademark or service mark in connection with the sale, offering for sale, distribution, or advertising of goods.
- **HB 1017** - Provides a small school performance grant to a public school, other than a charter school, that has an enrollment of fewer than 2,000.
- **HB 1252** - Makes changes to the eligibility criteria for admittance to the Indiana Veterans' Home. Transfers administration of the Indiana Veterans' Home building and grounds from the Department of Natural Resources to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- **HB 1016** - Permits, with several restrictions, a school corporation to transfer money in the corporation's general fund, transportation fund, capital projects fund, or school bus replacement fund to another fund for the purposes of the fund to which the money is transferred.

CO-AUTHORED

- **HB 1013** - Establishes a redistricting commission to create, hold hearings on, take public comment about, and recommend plans to redraw general assembly districts and congressional districts.
- **HB 1150** - Imposes general expenditure controls on the state. Provides procedures for the implementation of the spending controls.
- **HB 1215** - Adds certain motor vehicle offenses committed while under the influence of a controlled substance to the list of offenses whose commission may cause a person to be a habitual traffic violator.
- **HB 1220** - Provides that a person who knowingly or intentionally permits a minor to possess or consume an alcoholic beverage on real property that the person owns or controls commits a Class B misdemeanor, and increases the penalty.
- **HB 1256** - Provides a two year adjusted gross income deduction to corporations that are new Indiana employers.
- **HB 1304** - Allows a police officer appointed by a public postsecondary educational institution to exercise the powers granted to the police officer at any location in Indiana if: the educational institution approves the exercise of the powers and the police officer is engaged in the discharge of the police officer's official duties.
- **HB 1339** - Makes it a Class B misdemeanor for an alcoholic beverage permittee or permittee's employee or agent to recklessly, knowingly, or intentionally, sell alcoholic beverages for carryout without first requiring the person to produce proof that he/she is at least 21 years of age.
- **HB 1345** - Requires that a minor must have a signed written statement by a parent or guardian before spray tanning may be applied to the minor.